

Luther or Lutheran Quotes on Scripture Alone or Word Alone

²¹ According to divine right, therefore, it is the office of the bishop to preach the Gospel, forgive sins, judge doctrine and condemn doctrine that is contrary to the Gospel, and exclude from the Christian community the ungodly whose wicked conduct is manifest. *All this is to be done not by human power but by God's Word alone.*¹ (Augsburg Confession, Art 28)

The number of books on theology must be reduced and only the best ones published. It is not many books that make men learned, nor even reading. But it is a good book frequently read, no matter how small it is, that makes a man learned in the Scriptures and godly. Indeed, the writings of all the holy fathers should be read only for a time so that through them we may be led into the Scriptures. As it is, however, we only read them these days to avoid going any further and getting into the Bible. We are like men who read the sign posts and never travel the road they indicate. Our dear fathers wanted to lead us to the Scriptures by their writings, but we use their works to get away from the Scriptures. *Nevertheless, the Scripture alone is our vineyard in which we must all labor and toil.*² (To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate 1520)

Granted that Jerome, following Origen, interprets it thus: "He is said to lead astray when he does not at once recall from error," but who can assure us that Jerome and Origen interpret it correctly? In any case, we have an agreement that we are willing to fight each other, *not by appealing to the authority of any doctor, but by that of Scripture alone.*³ (Bondage of the Will)

Holy Scripture must necessarily be clearer, simpler, and more reliable than any other writings. Especially since all teachers verify their own statements through the Scriptures as clearer and more reliable writings, and desire their own writings to be confirmed and explained by them. But nobody can ever substantiate an obscure saying by one that is more obscure; therefore, necessity forces us to run to the Bible with the writings of all teachers,

¹ Tappert, T. G. (Ed.). (1959). *The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.* (p. 84). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.

² Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 44: The Christian in Society I.* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 44, p. 205). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

³ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 33: Career of the Reformer III.* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 33, p. 167). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

and to obtain there a verdict and judgment upon them. *Scripture alone is the true lord and master of all writings and doctrine on earth. If that is not granted, what is Scripture good for?* The more we reject it, the more we become satisfied with men's books and human teachers.⁴ (Defense and Explanation of the Articles 1521)

St. Augustine did the same thing, and writes that he would believe no teacher, no matter how godly and learned he might be, unless he proved his teaching with Scripture or clear reason. From this we learn how the fathers should be read, namely, that we should not consider what they say but whether they use clear Scripture or reason. But Emser and the pope's sects should not be blamed for fearing to do and to suffer such things and for inventing other ruses. For if they really would allow themselves to be pressured into proving their point with clear Scripture—God help them—then the abomination would be discovered and they could no longer deny that their sect is the rule of the Antichrist seducing the whole world in the name of “church” and “priesthood,” as I shall bring to light someday, if God grants it. That is why they are almost forced to blaspheme and to disgrace Scripture, to sweep it under the rug,⁴⁶ and to pretend that it is an obscure fog and that one should follow the interpretation of the fathers and seek the light in the darkness. One should not use the fathers' teachings for anything more than to get into Scripture as they did, *and then one should remain with Scripture alone. But Emser thinks that they should have a special function alongside the Scriptures, as if Scripture were not enough for teaching us.*⁵

They wrong the fathers and say of them what is not true. It is not the task of the fathers to throw light on the Scriptures with their own glosses, but rather to set forth the clear Scriptures and so *to prove Scripture with Scripture alone*, without adding any of their own thoughts. It is true they claim, that heretics are produced by the Scriptures. From where else should they come? For there is no book which teaches faith except the Scriptures. Therefore just as no Christian is born except by the Scriptures, so too no one can become a heretic except by the Scriptures. For if Christ is a sign of rejection over which men stumble, some falling, others getting up again, should we therefore reject him or set up another Christ alongside of him? If you abuse wine and bread, should fields and vineyards therefore go untended or others be cultivated instead? The evil spirit is an enemy of the Scripture and he has given it an evil reputation and made it suspect in this matter because of those blasphemous mouths which shout these things everywhere.⁶

⁴ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 32: Career of the Reformer II*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 32, pp. 11–12). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

⁵ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 39: Church and Ministry I*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 39, pp. 166–167). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

⁶ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 52: Sermons II*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 52, p. 176). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.